

## THE TALK



### Did you know?

Did you know that the earliest known illustration of a man using a condom is a 12,000–15,000 year-old painting on the wall of a cave in France? Or that the famous lover Casanova wore condoms made of linen and tied on with a ribbon?

For more fun facts about condoms, check out our [blog!](#)

*Hello and welcome back to “The Talk” – the newsletter for parents and caring adults that can provide answers when you need to have those tough talks about sexuality with your young people. This edition addresses using condoms correctly. While it may be some time before your young people may need this information, it is good for them to know before they engage in sexual behavior. Keep the conversation going!*

### Condoms: Are They in Your Safer Sex Kit?

Condoms have been around for centuries! There is evidence of condom use as far back as ancient Egyptian times around 1000 BC. Condoms are made from natural sources such as lambskin, latex (a form of rubber and polyurethane or nitrile) types of plastic and synthetic rubber. The rubber condoms that are known for their ability to prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) were invented by Charles Goodyear in 1844. The 1930s brought about more widespread use of latex condoms. The sexual revolution of 1960s saw a decline in condom use. When HIV was identified in the 1980s, condoms became the most effective way to prevent its spread besides sexual abstinence. In the 1990s condom manufacturers began to produce a large variety of condoms in different shapes, sizes, textures and colors. The polyurethane condom made its debut as well. <http://www.undercovercondoms.com/condom-history.asp>

Condoms are a barrier method of protection against pregnancy and STIs. Some advantages include:

- Inexpensive compared to other methods of birth control
- Can be obtained without a prescription
- Offered in many different varieties
- Few side effects unless one is allergic to latex. If so, there are plastic (polyurethane) or synthetic rubber (nitrile) varieties that are effective as well
- Some are designed to be worn externally on a penis and some are designed to be worn internally in a vagina or anus.
- A great back up method when other birth control methods are unavailable or they fail
- Provide protection against pregnancy and some STIs if used consistently and correctly.

Disadvantages include the belief that condoms ruin the feel and pleasure of sexual activity, the fit is uncomfortable, they break frequently or that they negatively impact the spontaneity of sexual encounters.

The truth about condoms is that they are very effective at preventing pregnancy and STIs (transmitted by infected bodily secretions) if they are used with each and every act of vaginal, oral or anal sex. Condom manufacturers are required to meet FDA standards to assure that condoms are reliable at preventing pregnancy and STIs. Studies have shown that they are effective at preventing STIs such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, trichomoniasis and HIV. They can provide some protection against herpes, genital warts and syphilis as long as the infected body part is covered by the condom. It is important to remember that condom use cannot provide 100% protection against pregnancy or STIs. They do, however, make vaginal, oral and anal intercourse far safer than not using them.

Bottom line – if you choose to be sexually active, condoms can be a valuable tool in your safer sex kit. Condoms today are designed to be safe and fun! With the variety in shapes, textures, colors and sizes, you and your partner can make them sexier and more fun to use. There are also many types of lubricants that can add to the fun, pleasure and safety of using condoms.

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### Tip

If you feel so inclined, leave a box of “just in case” condoms under the bathroom sink. Explain to your teen that this is for anyone (them or a friend) who needs them, and if the box disappears you won’t ask any questions or make any judgments.



Resources for condom information:

<http://www.undercovercondoms.com/condomsense.asp>

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/birth-control/condom>

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-info/birth-control/female-condom>

<http://www.fc2femalecondom.com/faqs/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/search.do?subset=&queryText=condoms>

### Ask The Educator

**Q** – My partner and I are having problems with the condom frequently breaking. We use a condom most of the time. I always watch my partner put the condom on, and he does it correctly every time. Sometimes we put baby oil on the condom when more lubrication is needed. We’re thinking of not using condoms any more since we’re not getting much protection from them. What do you suggest?

**A** – It sounds like you and your partner are able to discuss the frustration you are currently experiencing with your safer sex plan, and that’s good! Communication is always essential in a sexual relationship.

The male condom is up to 98% effective if used correctly and every time during vaginal, oral or anal intercourse. Since the condom is considered barrier protection, it provides dual protection against pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Baby oil is an oil-based product that will cause the condom to break. Any lubrication used on the condom must be water-based to prevent breakage. I would suggest that you use a water-based lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly, with the condom the next time you need additional lubrication, and that should stop the problems you are having with the condom frequently breaking.

### Professional’s Corner

Parents and youth professionals have opportunities to teach youth about safer sex practices including information about using condoms. If young people believe you are “askable”, they may bring questions and comments to you about condoms and other sex topics. Here are some suggestions that may be helpful to you when having those conversations:

- Educate yourself to make sure you have accurate information that you can provide to them.
- Avoid the assumption that because they have questions about condoms or birth control, that must mean they are sexually active.
- Think about your own values about condoms and safer sex and the messages you want to convey. Professionals should remain neutral, avoid being judgmental and present age appropriate information that covers a range of values and beliefs. Parents can take the opportunity to be intentional about discussing their values about condom use.
- Find out what they know already about condoms and safer sex and add information to correct any myths they may have heard.
- Keep a list of resources handy that you can use to make referrals when necessary.